

What is Claimed is:

Sub A1 1. A method of enabling a plurality of users to each individually operate a user computer system connected to a communication link to remotely retrieve discrete data units from one of a plurality of electronic publications stored on a central computer system via a communication link connected therebetween, said method comprising the steps of:

(a.) establishing a library database in a central computer for storing a plurality of electronic publications, each of said publications comprised of a plurality of discrete data units;

(b.) establishing a user profile database in said central computer for storing a plurality of individual user profiles, and through which user is provided with selective access to said library database;

(c.) receiving a request for data units from a user, and enabling the user to selectively retrieve desired one or more data units from a selected one of said electronic publications;

(d.) determining the validity of the user's request based on information in the request and information stored in the corresponding individual user profile of the user profile database;

(e.) transmitting said desired data units upon determining the validity of the user's request, from said central computer system to a user computer system operated by said user via a communication link connected therebetween; and

(f.) displaying said desired data units on a display device of said user computer system for viewing by said user, wherein said displaying is performed in response to said transmitting said desired data units from said central computer system to said user computer system.

5           2.     The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting said desired data units to said user computer system over the Internet.

3.     The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting said desired data units to said user computer system over a radiotelegraphic system.

10          4.     The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting said desired data units to said user computer system over a cable system.

5.     The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting said desired data units to said user computer system over satellite-based communication system.

15          6.     The method of claim 1, wherein said desired data units comprise text works.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said desired data units comprise graphical works.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said request information comprises user identification input and a password input for enabling user access to the central computer.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of:  
establishing a registration process for permitting users who are not registered access to said library database.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said establishing a registration process comprises:

receiving personal and billing information from said user;  
establishing a newly created individual user profile;  
assigning an individual user profile, a user identification and an associated password to said user, and  
copying said personal and billing information and assigned information to said individual user profile.

11. The method of claim 10, comprising the step of providing a software facility for the handling of billing of access to said plurality of said electronic publications stored on said library database.

5 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
receiving selection information of electronic publications from said user;  
evaluating said selection information with information contained in  
corresponding user profile;  
approving said selection information of said electronic publications;  
writing said selection information in said associated user profile for  
10 permitting future access to said selected electronic publications; and  
performing review selection processing for permitting the user to review  
selection information.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said performing review selection  
processing comprises:  
15 displaying said selection information of said electronic publications on said  
display device of the user computer system;  
receiving modification input from the user to modify said selection  
information, wherein said modification input operates to modify the selection of one or  
more electronic publications;

modifying said selection information upon evaluation and approval of said modified selection information in response to receiving said modification input; and displaying said selection information after said modifying.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

5 permitting participating text providers who have satisfied security access criteria to add, modify, or delete electronic publications in said library database.

15. The method of claim 1, prior to the transmitting step, further comprising the step of:

10 timestamping electronically the data units by said central computer for limiting residence time of the data units in the user computer system.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the transmitting step further comprises: limiting the quantity of transmitted data units to a fixed amount for each request.

15 17. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving request from the user comprises receiving request from the user which operates to select a search engine for searching for one or more electronic publications.

18. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

enabling the user to search for available electronic publications on said library database by a search parameter selected from a group consisting of title, author, ISDN, publisher, subject matter, and genre.

19. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

5 establishing a school information database in said central computer for storing a plurality of individual school profiles by which each student user can access a corresponding plurality of preassigned electronic publications stored in said library database.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of:

10 establishing a student registration process for permitting the student user to access to said corresponding plurality of preassigned electronic publications.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said establishing a student registration process comprises the steps of:

15 receiving school and student information of said student user;  
searching said school profile database and corresponding school profile for information relating to said student user;  
establishing a newly created individual user profile;  
assigning a user identification, a password, and a listing of preassigned electronic publications for access by said student user; and

copying said assignment information to the newly created individual user profile for said student user.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of:  
receiving modification input from the student user to modify the listing of preassigned electronic publications for access by said student user; and  
modifying the listing of preassigned electronic publications upon authorization and approval by school authorities.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein said displaying step is performed on a dedicated reader enhancement software installed in said user computer system for providing high font resolution and rendering capabilities.